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Antonin Carême (1783-1833)

"There are five beautiful art forms: The art of painting, the art of sculpting, the art of writing, the art of music and the art of architecture, which most important branch is the art of confection."

Antonin Carême

Marie Antonin Carême was son of a poor alcoholic unskilled worker, and at the age of 10 he was sent away from home to make a living. He got an apprenticeship in a simple pub and in a period of six years he got basic knowledge in the kitchen.

At the age of only 17, he got employed by a famous Parisian pâtissier Sylvain Bailly. Among his influential clients were important European personalities, especially Charles Maurice de Talleyrand.

and was often accused of making affected and too heavy menus, in which the 'pièces montées' could seem as a waste of ingredients, seen with today's eyes.

According to Anne Willan's "Greate Cooks and their Recipes –from Taillevent to Escoffier" one can establish that he, in spite of his passion for impressive presentations, took part in simplifying menus. In connection with that, Anne refers to Carême's description of his own image of an ideal menu:

"Vegetable soup, followed by grilled of braised fillet steak, served with glazed vegetables or rice and a plain jus. Then poached fish or fish cooked au gratin or fish stew, a roasted bird with vegetables, cake, salad and dessert." Antonin Carême

When the Napoleonic War ended in 1815 one could begin to find analogues to today's cooking, mainly because of Carême and his rival Beauvillier. Contrary to Carême, who worked in private homes, Beauvillier worked as a restaurateur. Beauvillier died in 1820, before the competition between the two chefs would develop into something negative. In his late years he was more famous than Carême, because he achieved great recognition for his work "L'Art de cuisine" from 1814.

Beauvillier ridiculed Carême's work with ruins and temples –but Carême claimed that his art served as nourishment for both the intelligence and the heart. But Beauvillier answered that a chef's job was not to satisfy the eye but the mouth. At this time Carême was mostly known as a confectioner

Sylvain Bailly was, according to Carême, a generous man, who twice a week let him study in Cabinet des Gravures, where he taught himself to write and count. In Cabinet des Estampes, at the royal library, he studied architectural expressions and read cookbooks from other countries and from former times.

Carême must have had a flair for design and new tendencies, because he linked confection and architecture in his works. He copied historical architectural works and translated them into so-called *pieces montées*, impressive decorative centerpieces that adorned great dinners. The common serving manner was in the beginning of 19th century, a so-called 'à la française', with all dishes on one buffet with a decorative centerpiece.



Antonin Carême (Willan (1977):129)

Carême's main contributions to gastronomy:

- Systematization of aspic-dishes
- Popularization of the cold buffet
- Systematization of classical French cooking
- Simplification of menus
- Efficiency improvement in the kitchen
- Underlining the main ingredient by serving the ingredient as a garniture, meat with meat and fish with fish
- Simplifying the sauce range, three basics: espagnole, velouté og béchamel.
- Founding the so-called grand cuisine
- Educating important students such as Plumerey, Félix Urbain Dubois and the unique Jules Gouffé

Antonin Carême

1783–1833



One of the kitchens of the Brighton Pavilion
(Willan (1977):128)

At that time a pâtissier was on equal terms with the chefs in the internal kitchen-hierarchy.

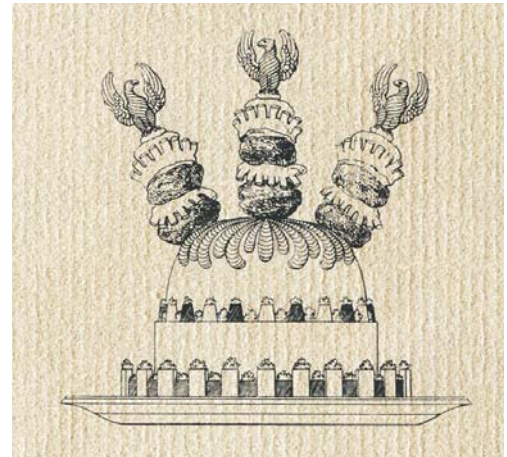
Carême showed a great talent for centerpieces and for impressive cake constructions. The presentation of food was in general one of his big passions, and his working methods and his study of form can be compared to contemporary architect- and sculptor studies.

After a couple of years Carême found new challenges, first at an unknown confectioner but in 1803 with his own shop. It was situated in Rue de la Piau, which already at that time, held the luxury we know today in Paris with Cartier leading the way.

Carême had a great influence on the development of kitchen tools and kitchen interior, on the chef's uniform and education, and also on the status of

the profession in the society in general.

The society became slowly more and more democratized during the 19th century, which made consumer goods more available. Luxury goods and activities had earlier been reserved the Royal Household and very rich people, but now it was available for all who could pay for it. The phenomenon of restaurants arose after the terror of the French Revolution, in which the overconsumption at the Royal Household was displayed. The professional chefs and waiters, which were to find in great numbers in the Royal Household, suddenly had to find new jobs. They transferred their profession into the streets of Paris. The new powerful and wealthy higher middle class became the audience in the new restaurants.



A construction of cake. A so-called pièce montée (Willan (1977):131)

Alexandre Ter” and “Projects d’architecture pour l’embellissement de Paris” were released. With both of the books he tried to use the knowledge he had gained by working with “pieces montées” to promote the monumental Paris.

However, Carême chose to avoid these new tendencies and reserved his services for the more exclusive society with wealth and power. After a youth working in a pub, he never again cooked in a restaurant, but he became an important person in the meeting between gastronomy and politics when he from 1804 to 1814 managed the many kitchens of the statesman Talleyrand. In the period he organized spectacular national events, among other things the celebrations of the wedding between Napoleon and Marie Louise of Austria in 1810. Talleyrand used one hour every day to discuss the menu with Antonin Carême.

Soon he had built up a reputation which reached far beyond France, and he did not let national reservations get in the way of his own career

options. He was in charge of serving Zar Alexander in 1814 after Napoleon had been defeated and again in a period of a couple of weeks in the following year. In 1815 Carême organized a so-called banquet for all the allies near Châlons in Champagne. Faithful and patriotic was not terms one could use to describe Carême.

The appearance of professional chefs and civil restaurants in the 19th century, also created a new field for cultural criticism, and some writers started working with reviews and gastronomic criticism. Some of the critics were Grimod de la Reynière and Anthelme de Brillant-Savarin, who even sat together with Talleyrand at the dining table.

Carême left Talleyrand in 1815, in order to work for the English prince regent, the later King George IV.

He was very appreciated in the beginning and the prince regent praised him at different occasions. In 1815 he published two books at more or less the same time; "Le Pâtissier royal Parisien" and "Le Pâtissier pittoresque". In these he showed hundreds of designs, inspired by for instance Greek temples, ruins and classical pillar pavilions. Internal envy in the profession and the critical attitude Carême held towards English cooking skills, got him to return to Paris three years later. He worked for the Russian Royal Household and later for the British Ambassador in Vienna in 1820. Here he felt more at home. According to Carême the quality of ingredients and the general culinary level was higher only in Paris. He continued to publish books; in 1821 "Projets d'architecture dédiés à